

## BOOK REVIEW

ALHOS FARJON. 2008. **A Natural History of Conifers**. (ISBN 978-0-88192-869-3, hbk.). Timber Press, Inc., The Haseltine Building, 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97204, U.S.A. (**Orders:** [www.timberpress.com](http://www.timberpress.com), 1-800-827-5622). \$34.95, 304 pp., 157 color photos, 39 line drawings, 7 3/8" × 10 3/8".

A plant group that has survived 300 million years through very adverse conditions deserves a well written book. This is what we have in this volume. Mr. Farjon, retired head of the temperate section of the Kew Herbarium, is an obviously dedicated botanist and always had a working knowledge of the conifers. Upon retiring and deciding to write a book on the subject, he started to study them all over again. Here we are given an extensive study of the conifers. An enlightening chapter on corrected classification using contemporary methods tells of the many families extinct and extant which, added to DNA studies, gives a more accurate history of the group.

The ecology of the conifers and their place in history is also covered. Because these trees have been found almost all over the globe, their geography is long and involved. Of course they are also a plant of the people. Since some are fast-growing and quite dense, their connection with the construction timber industry and thus humanity is very important.

This connection segues to conifer conservation as the last area of the author's thoughts. He offers detailed information on both the unfortunate extinction of some species and the hopeful avoidance of extinction in other species.

The writing should be of interest to the non-scientist and the scientist alike. The many photographs by the author that are provided, some of which depict trees you would have to travel long, difficult ways to see for yourself, make this a wonderful book.—*Elaine Bell*, Volunteer, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas 76102-4025, U.S.A.